

## The Reality of a Modern Day School Teacher

By Congressman Jerry Moran

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When asked to name a person who has made a difference in one's life, the most common response, other than a family member, is that of a favorite teacher. This simple response speaks volumes about the influence educators have on the lives of young people. The education profession has long been known for inadequate pay but high job satisfaction. Teachers have been willing to forfeit material gain for the joy of seeing the eyes of their students light up as they grow and learn.

Lately, the job satisfaction that brought so many teachers into the profession seems to have left the classroom. Unfortunately, much of this development can be attributed to No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The joy of teaching has been replaced by pressure-filled staff meetings where educators talk not about how to help a child learn, but rather their school's test scores. Morale in the education world has diminished, and more teachers are at wits end.

Recently, a teacher in Lindsborg told me of her frustration. She wrote, "I am a first-year teacher, and I am beginning to get very discouraged. I went into the teaching profession to help students learn and to encourage them to follow their dreams. However, I am finding that more and more of my time is spent preparing students for standardized tests. These tests do not prepare students for any career. They only teach students how to take a test. With all these tests, we don't have time to teach. I truly feel that the time and effort I put into teaching is not worth my while. No Child Left Behind is wonderful in theory, but impossible to carry out. Not every child is equal in ability, and no teacher should be expected to make it so."

With the number of teachers leaving the profession exceeding the number of teachers entering the profession by 23 percent, this young educator's thoughts should be a warning. If we have to shut the doors on schools in Kansas it will not be because of lack of students, it will be because we cannot find the teachers to fill the vacancies. Congress must be sensitive to the responsibility we hold in encouraging educators to stay in the classroom and continue their chosen profession. We need to strive for improvements in our education system, but we must make sure we do not overregulate the classroom. We must not take the joy and passion out of this noble profession by requiring things that are simply not possible.

This year, Congress is set to examine NCLB and potentially reauthorize it. While I voted against NCLB, I look forward to hearing from Kansans about how we should reform and change this policy. My hope is that Congress will make the changes necessary to help teachers succeed as they educate our greatest asset - our young people - and fulfill the jobs they love.

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